

Announcement of DIRECTV Virtual Call Center

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March 30, 2010

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Bluefield, Virginia

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I am pleased to join you today to announce the creation of 100 new, technology based jobs that will offer Southwest Virginia residents a unique employment opportunity. In fact, today's announcement is the first of its kind for our region.

I am pleased to announce that DIRECTV will operate a virtual call center in Southwest Virginia, hiring 100 of our region's residents to serve as remote agents.

The virtual call center marks another major success not only for my Showcasing Southwest Virginia Program in its effort to create new jobs for our region's residents by attracting top-tier companies to the area, but also for my longstanding work to expand our region's broadband infrastructure with the goal of creating new technology jobs. The 100 new jobs announced today have been made possible by the widespread availability of high-speed Internet services in Southwest Virginia.

My office began working with DIRECTV nearly 5 years ago when we hosted the company for a tour of several sites in the Ninth District. At that time, DIRECTV was looking for future sites for traditional call centers. Gary Qualls, DIRECTV's Vice President of Business Operations and Development who is with us this morning, participated in the company's initial visit. When the need arose to expand the company's Remote Agent Program, Gary remembered our region's excellent workforce, widespread broadband availability and outstanding training resources.

At my invitation, Gary returned in January to explore the potential for creating a virtual call center here. I hosted Gary on a tour of Southwest Virginia with a very different focus. We visited three regions of the Ninth Congressional District to survey the access to high-speed Internet services, the workforce and training opportunities.

The tour was a tremendous success, and as a result, DIRECTV has decided to operate a virtual call center in Southwest Virginia, hiring agents from across the three regions of the Ninth District—here in the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority region, as well as the aCorridor region and the New River Valley Alliance region.

The new virtual call center will be part of DIRECTV's Remote Agent Program, which is a growing segment of the company's customer service operations. Currently, DIRECTV employs 1,120 remote agents, representing 12 percent of the company's total call center staff. In fact, the program has proved to be so successful that DIRECTV saw a 100 percent increase in remote agent staffing last year.

DIRECTV and its call center partner Convergys will begin hiring 100 qualified individuals from Southwest Virginia right away. Training will take place in April, and the new remote agents will begin taking calls in May. Agents will take calls related to billing and account management, including review of packages and pricing and account changes.

The individuals hired as remote agents will receive an average wage of \$10 per hour, with the potential to earn an additional \$650 per month based on performance. The agents will enjoy benefits including paid holidays and vacations; medical, dental, and vision coverage with company contribution after 60 days; basic life insurance; flexible spending accounts; tuition reimbursement; 401K with a company match; and free DIRECTV.

These are the same wages and benefits available to DIRECTV agents who are based in the company's bricks-and-mortar call centers. The remote agents, however, have the benefit of not having to travel to work or pay for related expenses such as work apparel and meals out.

The remote agents hired by DIRECTV are able to work from home due to the high-speed Internet access available in many communities throughout our region. More than 15 years ago, I began encouraging local governments throughout the Ninth District to find a means of deploying broadband networks so that affordable high-speed Internet access would be available to businesses and residents. My goal in making this recommendation was to set our region apart in comparison to other rural areas of the nation, to make us more attractive than the typical rural region to industries looking to expand their operations into new locations and to create technology based jobs for Southwest Virginians.

With the efforts and foresight of many of our local government leaders, and assistance from federal and state funding sources, we have made great strides in the deployment of broadband. Fiber-optic backbone has been deployed throughout much of Southwest Virginia with the benefit of federal funding obtained at my request.

Additionally, we are making great strides in building-out our region's broadband infrastructure with middle mile and last mile networks. In the last year, several new last mile broadband networks were constructed in the VCEDA and aCorridor regions with federal funding I obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Community Connect program. High-speed Internet services are now available to the residents of the Mechanicsburg community of Bland County, the Trammel Community in Dickenson County, the Yuma community in Scott County, the Tannersville community in Tazewell County, and the St. Charles community in Lee County. Federal funding was also awarded for new networks in Grant in Grayson County, Blackwater in Lee County, Carbo in Russell County and Hurley in Buchanan County.

In the New River Valley Alliance region, last month I announced federal funding of more than \$5 million provided through the broadband deployment funds in the Economic Recovery Act to help pay for 110 miles of new ultra-high-speed broadband fiber extending from Blacksburg, through six counties to the new Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in Roanoke and on to Bedford. This open access network is expected to provide speeds from 10 gigabits per second up to 200 gigabits per second.

Today's announcement is a result of these significant steps in our goal to make high-speed

Internet services widely available throughout Southwest Virginia. Citizens and government officials at the local, state and federal levels have worked together to make today's announcement possible, and for that cooperation and successful work, I would like to take this opportunity to offer thanks to individuals without whom today's success would not be possible.

Jonathan Belcher, Director of the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority, deserves our appreciation today for his assistance in pulling together an impressive team of local economic developers, educators hiring and training specialists to help Southwest Virginia make the best possible case to DIRECTV. I want to thank Jonathan and the local economic development team for their support of the project.

I also want to thank Lea Lofty with the Virginia Department of Business Assistance for the resources and expertise she and the Department will bring to the project.

I would also like to thank Michael MacNeilly and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership for the technical assistance provided for this project and many others.

My Senior Advisor Becky Coleman deserves our thanks today for her efforts in putting together the DIRECTV tours.

Finally, I would also like to thank Gary Qualls with DIRECTV for his interest in Southwest Virginia and his confidence in our ability to help DIRECTV succeed with this cutting edge endeavor.

A job fair will be held April 6 at Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap from 4 PM to 8 PM and on April 7 at Bluefield State from 9 AM to 2 PM. Anyone interested in applying for these positions should attend one of these job fairs. Additionally, interested candidates can contact their nearest Virginia Employment Commission office. Visit www.vec.virginia.gov for further details. Interested individuals may also contact Convergys, DIRECTV's call center partner, at <http://careers.convergysworkathome.com>